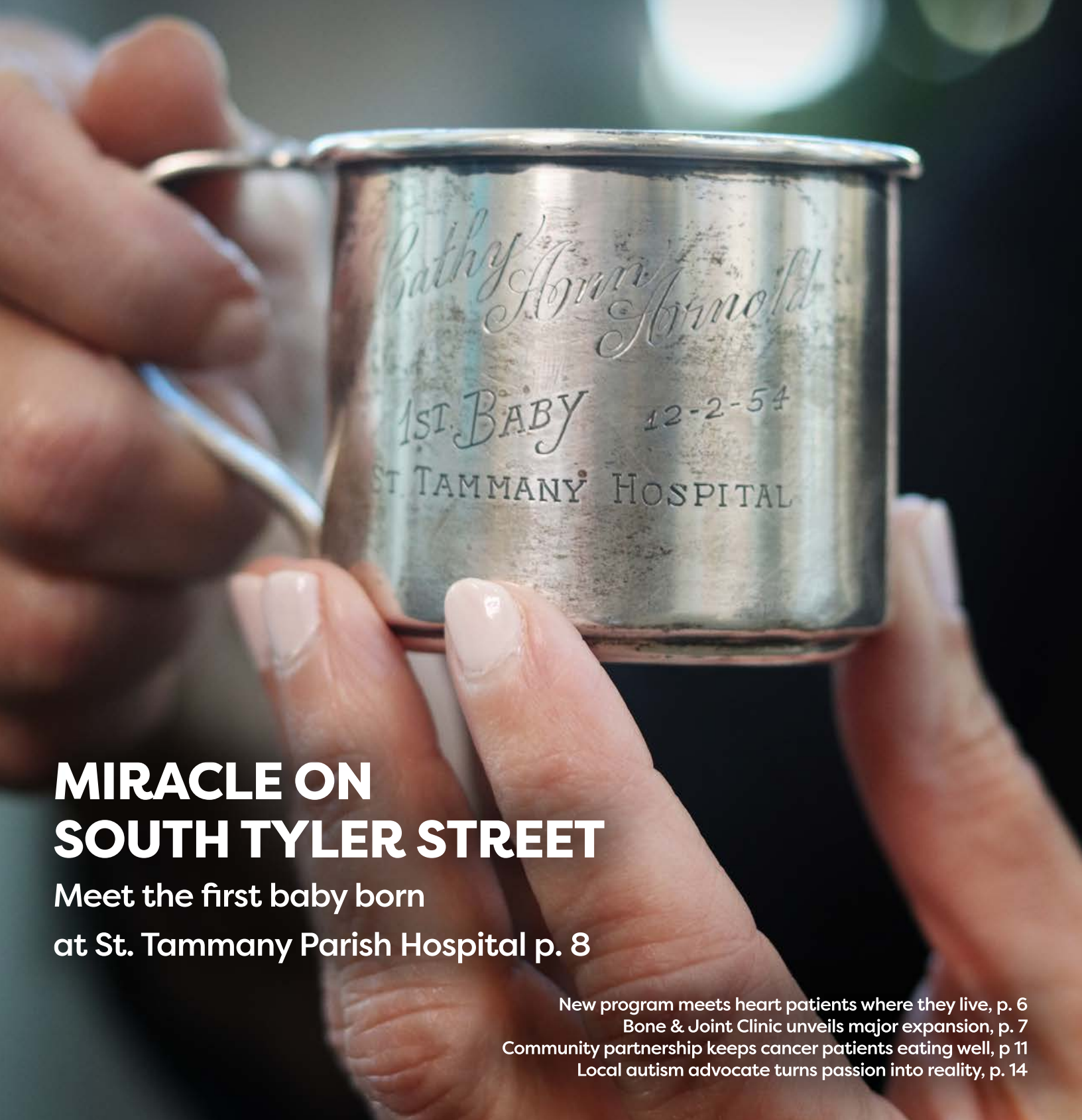




Heart to Heart

A publication of St. Tammany Health System



MIRACLE ON SOUTH TYLER STREET

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at St. Tammany Parish Hospital p. 8

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Women's Pavilion



From its founding in 2002, our Women's Pavilion has been laser-focused on delivering the best possible care to the women of the Northshore – but with patient comfort always at top of mind.

That's why we are so pleased to be recipients not only of Press Ganey's 2023 Human Experience Guardian of Excellence Award, placing us in the top 5% of U.S. healthcare organizations, but also of its Human Experience Pinnacle of Excellence Award, awarded in recognition of uncommonly compassionate care.

Thanks to Press Ganey for these honors, as well as to our Women's Pavilion team, for their unflinching dedication to our top priority: our patients.



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We are the heartbeat of our community, caring for our patients and their families with excellence, compassion and teamwork.

VISION

We will strengthen the health of our community with compassion, innovation and partnership.

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Gratefully Yours

Celebrating a milestone 70 years in the making



Joan Coffman, FACHE

“Every new year brings ample reason to rejoice, of course. But 2024 is shaping up to be particularly worthy of celebration here at St. Tammany Health System.”

Happy New Year!

Every new year brings ample reason to rejoice, of course. But 2024 is shaping up to be particularly worthy of celebration here at St. Tammany Health System.

Part of that is because of the myriad groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings we have in store as we continue expanding to meet the needs of our fast-growing Northshore community.

Also, though, this year will bring a milestone anniversary for us. On Dec. 1, we will mark the 70th anniversary of our founding as St. Tammany Parish Hospital.

We are so excited that we have already started the celebration, as you will see on this issue's cover, which features a photograph of the silver cup given to the first baby born at St. Tammany Parish Hospital on Dec. 2, 1954.

You can read her story on page 8. It is one of a number of STHS history stories we have planned as we count down to our big day – but, 60,000 births later, it is easily among my favorites.

I hope you find it and the other stories in this issue every bit as engaging and informative as I did. We look forward to bringing you more stories about our history as we count down to the big day.

Thank you for taking the time to read them – and thank you, as always, for trusting St. Tammany Health System with your family's healthcare needs.

Gratefully,

Joan M. Coffman, FACHE
St. Tammany Health System president and CEO



Angels of Light

St. Tammany Health System President and CEO Joan Coffman addresses those gathered at December's Angels of Light tree-lighting ceremony, an event held by St. Tammany Hospital Foundation to benefit hospice care. Read more about the event on page 13.

STHS introduces Aquablation therapy for enlarged prostate

Community support hailed as key to acquisition of innovative system

By *STHS Communication Department*

With support from donors to St. Tammany Hospital Foundation, St. Tammany Health System has become the second in the region and the first on the Northshore to offer robotic-assisted Aquablation therapy, a minimally invasive treatment for lower urinary tract symptoms due to an enlarged prostate.

Enabling surgeons to better preserve a patient's sexual function and continence by removing part of the prostate tissue while avoiding critical structures, Aquablation therapy has been proven in clinical studies to offer predictable and reproducible outcomes, independent of prostate anatomy, prostate size or surgeon experience.

The procedure is performed with use of the AquaBeam Robotic System, the first FDA-cleared, surgical robot utilizing automated tissue resection for the treatment of lower urinary tract symptoms due to enlarged prostate.



(Image courtesy Procept BioRobotics)

In addition to further bolstering the health system's clinical capabilities, the purchase of the Aquablation system — made with use of unrestricted gifts to the foundation — is emblematic of the unique connection between the community and the health system, according to foundation Executive Director Nicole Suhre.

“Our community is full of individuals and businesses who are deeply invested in the health and wellbeing of this community,” she said. “They

give out of their own pockets because they believe STHS is more than just a hospital — they believe it is a staple of what makes our community so unique and special. And they are right.”

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), or an enlarged prostate, is a non-cancerous condition in which the prostate has grown larger than normal. About half of men ages 51 to 60 have BPH, and the incidence increases every decade of life.

If left untreated, BPH can cause significant health problems, including irreversible bladder or kidney damage, bladder stones and incontinence.

Until now, BPH surgical treatments have often forced men to trade off between symptom relief and side effects, limiting patients to choose between either a high degree of symptom relief with high rates of irreversible complications such as incontinence, erectile dysfunction or ejaculatory dysfunction, or a low degree of symptom relief with low rates of irreversible complications. ■

Visit StTammany.health/robotics to learn more about our surgical robotic fleet.

This is the way: STHS unveils interactive hospital map

By *STHS Communication Department*

Navigating the hallways of St. Tammany Health System's flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital just got easier.

The health system recently unveiled an electronic wayfinding system designed to guide visitors through the Covington hospital upon their arrival on campus.

The system isn't designed to get people to the hospital from outside locations or to travel between the hospital and other STHS locations. But, according to health system Vice President / Chief Information Officer Craig Doyle, it should make navigating the ever-growing facility a breeze.

“Think of it as GPS for the hospital grounds once you've arrived,” Doyle said.

Users can access the system in two ways:

By clicking the “Hospital Map” icon near the top right of the health system's website (StTammany.health) and entering their on-campus destination, users will get a map highlighting the route to that destination.

By clicking the “Hospital Map” icon on the health system's mobile app — available both for Apple devices as well as for Android devices — users will get a dynamic map that uses a blue dot to mark their progress as they

make their way to their destination.

“Anyone who has visited our campus recently knows it is just getting bigger and bigger,” Doyle said. “By leveraging this new technology, we hope to maintain the hospitable, user-friendly atmosphere for which St. Tammany Health System is known throughout the community.” ■



The health system's new wayfinding system works both from desktop and mobile devices. (STHS image)

FLOWER POWER

It might be the middle of winter, but it feels like spring at St. Tammany Health System, with Daisy Awards and Sunflower Awards aplenty.



Neurosciences nurse Raven Williams, left, is surprised by Chief Nursing Officer Kerry Milton with a Daisy Award for Extraordinary Nurses. Raven was nominated by patient Ray Thompson, who wrote: “She is the ultimate professional without being stiff. If I complained about anything, she would listen and then flip it to a positive moment. She always knew the right thing to say to make me feel better.” (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



Labor and Delivery nurse Katelyn Beattle, second from right, is joined for a photo by, from left, STHS Chief Nursing Office Kerry Milton, AVP-Women and Children's Services Cindy Ingram and New Family Center Director Jamie Romage. Katelyn was one of three STHS nurses to receive the Daisy Award for Extraordinary Nursing for the third quarter of 2023. (Photo by Jan Budenz / STHS)



New Family Center nurse Deborah Bordelon, right, was nominated for a Daisy Award by patient Alexandra Dees, left, who wrote: “She is an absolute angel, and I'm so grateful to have her on one of the most important days of my life! This was my second delivery at STHS and by far the best experience because of her and the other wonderful nurses I had during my time here!” (Photo by Jan Budenz / STHS)



Oncology Nursing Assistant Michaela Rivera, left, reacts as STHS Chief Nursing Officer Kerry Milton surprises her with a Sunflower Award. Michaela was nominated for the award by colleague Jamie Romage, whose mother was a patient. (Photos by Jan Budenz / STHS)



STHS Patient Relations Assistant Sherman FitzSimons reacts after being surprised with a Sunflower Award by Chief Operating Officer Sharon Toups. The Sunflower Award recognizes non-nursing colleagues for their contributions to the health system's healing mission. (Photo by Jan Budenz / STHS)

STAT!

Quick hits from the STHS newsroom

St. Tammany Health System's flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital has been singled out by Women's Choice as a best hospital in 10 individual areas for 2024: **Patient Safety, Emergency Care, Heart Care, Stroke Care, Minimally Invasive Surgery, Obstetrics, Cancer Care, Comprehensive Breast Care, Mammogram Imaging and Women's Services.** ... St. Tammany Parish Hospital was named to Newsweek's list of **Best In-State Hospitals** for 2024. ... STHS's New Family Center has been named to U.S. News & World Report's 2024 listing of **Best Hospitals for Maternity Care.** ... STHS and its Bone & Joint Clinic have been recognized by Becker's Hospital Review with a spot on its 2023 list of **100 Hospitals and Health Systems with Great Orthopedics Programs.** It is one of just three Louisiana organizations to make the list ... In November, the health system earned its **16th consecutive “A” grade for patient safety** from the Leapfrog Group. ... Director of Outpatient Operations **Jay Morange** was named to Edge of the Lake magazine's 40 Under 40 list for 2023. ... **Tory Mansfield** of the STHS Communication Department was named Graphic Designer of the Year by the Louisiana Hospital Association. ... Nurse **Eloise Ward-Brumfield** retired in November after 19 ½ years with STHS. ■

Is there a St. Tammany Health System employee you'd like to honor? Find out how at StTammany.health/ThankYou or by scanning the code at right.



Score one for the home team

New program meets heart patients where they live. Literally.

By Mike Scott, miscott@stph.org

Mary Bahn's cell phone rang. "I'm out walking the dog right now," she told the person on the other line.

For her, even that was a personal victory.

Just five months earlier, the simple act of breathing was difficult for the 81-year-old congestive heart failure patient following an episode that landed her on life support at St. Tammany Health System's flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital.

Her condition at that point was so dire doctors weren't sure she'd make it.

But Mary Bahn is made of tougher stuff than that. Not only did she make it, but she has become the poster child for a pilot program launched this past spring by the health system's Home Health Services team to help congestive heart failure patients more effectively manage their conditions.

Working with a patient's existing care team and collaborating with various STHS departments – from cardiology and primary care to physical therapy and cardiac rehab – the program is built around a combination of remote patient monitoring, patient education, structured patient outreach and regular in-home visits from STHS care providers.

In its first five months, the program has seen 30-day hospital readmissions plummet from a monthly average of nine congestive heart failure patients to fewer than three.

"Education is typically the biggest intervention that we make," said STHS Nurse Practitioner Jason Green, who has been spearheading the program with nurse Daley Harrington and



St. Tammany Health System Home Health nurses Jason Green, left, and Daley Harrington, right, visit with Mary and Walter Bahn – along with pooch Minnie – in the Bahns' Mandeville home. Mary Bahn was one of the first patients in a pilot program designed to reduce the re-hospitalization of patients with congestive heart failure. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)



Congestive heart failure patients participating in a new program at St. Tammany Health System are given a refrigerator magnet, funded by St. Tammany Hospital Foundation, to manage symptoms at home through the Transitions of Care Team Program, with the goal of avoiding unnecessary hospitalizations. (STHS photo)

Post-Acute Navigator Anna Thomas. "Honestly, if people are well-educated on their dietary changes, their lifestyle modifications, we can get ahead of congestive heart failure exacerbations before they even happen.

"We may not have to add medications. We may not have to change a thing. If we can get in there early and effectively change the habits they have, we can avoid an exacerbation and eventually avoid a hospitalization, which is good for everybody."

For Mrs. Bahn, that extra layer of support has been invaluable.

"I might be 81, but I want to be 50," she said. "I want to be able to do all the things I could." ■

That includes walking Minnie, her mystery breed attention hound, and getting back to eschewing the elevator in favor of the stairs to the third-floor Mandeville condo she shares with husband Walter.

To get to that point, the Bahns have been educating themselves on such things as ways to cut the sodium in her diet, something they've found help with on YouTube and various Facebook groups, as well as the role sleep habits play in congestive heart failure.

Mrs. Bahn acknowledges she still has headway to make, but there's no question she's already come a long way.

"Now, I'm 200% better," she said. "Probably 300%."

That's music to Green's ears.

"Congestive heart failure is scary, it's life-changing, it's a big diagnosis that carries a lot of weight," he said. "But it's not the end of the world. We can treat it. Especially at St. Tammany, with this new program, we have the capability to work with your current care team, we have the capability to bring care into your home, and we have the capability to really change the outcome of your care journey." ■



Scan the QR code to learn more about St. Tammany Health System's Home Care Services.

"Patients should know when they come to our St. Tammany Bone & Joint Clinic ... that 'all their needs will be filled in one clinic.'" - Dr. Roch Hontas

Bone & Joint growing by Leaps & Bounds

The Northshore's oldest orthopedics clinic adds space, capabilities

By Mike Scott, miscott@stph.org

Western St. Tammany Parish's oldest full-service orthopedic clinic is growing.

St. Tammany Health System's Bone & Joint Clinic, which was founded as a private practice in 1969 and joined the health system in 2013, recently unveiled an expansion of its facility on Louisiana 21, nearly doubling its physical footprint from 7,700 square feet to 12,900 square feet.

In addition to giving its orthopedic staff more clinical space in which to operate – and also freshening up the previously existing space – the project expands the clinic's capabilities to include on-site physical therapy and the addition of a fifth physician, Dr. Matthew Webb, an orthopedic surgeon specializing in total joint replacement.

He joins longtime Bone & Joint physicians Dr. Mark Hontas, Dr. Roch Hontas, Dr. Joey LaMartina and Dr. McCall McDaniel.

"It has already exceeded my expectations," Dr. Roch Hontas said of the expansion, much of which has been in use since late July as construction crews finish up the rest of the job. "I personally underestimated the benefit patients would see going to physical therapy under the same roof where their physician was located. I haven't had anybody say they'd rather go someplace else, so that's been a great addition to the office."

In all, the expansion added 5,200 square feet of space. Of that, 3,000 is earmarked for clinical use, with the remaining 2,200 square feet



As part of the recent expansion of STHS's Bone & Joint Clinic, a 2,200-square-foot rehabilitation gym was built on-site. It includes such leading-edge equipment as an AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill, designed to relieve a patient of as much as 80 percent of their body weight, which allows the rehab process to begin much earlier than previously. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)

being used for physical therapy.

Given the expansion, as well as the health system's partnership with Ochsner – which is a particularly close one in the orthopedic realm – Dr. Hontas said the Bone & Joint clinic is the closest thing Northshore patients have to a one-stop orthopedics shop.

"With the possible exception of spine and orthopedic oncology, we have every subspecialty of orthopedic surgery covered," he said. "Patients should know when they come to our St. Tammany Bone & Joint Clinic, they don't have to go any farther. All their needs will be filled in one clinic. That's not by accident, that's by design."

Dr. Hontas also pointed out that patients of the STHS Bone & Joint Clinic further benefit from its association with St. Tammany Parish Hospital, which provides an important advantage when it comes to handling complicated surgical procedures. That is not the case with boutique hospitals, which often must

transfer patients to a nearby acute care hospital – often St. Tammany – in the event of complications.

Originally conceived in 2021, the Bone & Joint expansion has been a long time in coming. But, Dr. Hontas said, it has been worth the wait.

"The Board of Commissioners and the administration of St. Tammany Health System gave us their full and unconditional support, which we tremendously appreciate," he said. "All of our needs were somewhat unique, but we were all accommodated. Dr. LaMartina has more elbow room, Dr. McDaniel has a specialized area catering to children, and my brother and I have our designated space in the front of the office."

"It really worked out perfectly for everybody. With the addition of physical therapy, this is now truly a full-service orthopedic clinic." ■

Visit [StTammany.health/OutpatientTherapy](https://www.sttammany.health/OutpatientTherapy) for a video tour of the new gym space.

The first family of St. Tammany

70 years later, the first baby born at St. Tammany Parish Hospital shares her story

By Mike Scott, mscott@stph.org

It was Dec. 1, 1954, and Christmas was coming, so 22-year-old Ottis Arnold and his 20-year-old bride, Catherine Gregoire Arnold, were up on the roof of their Bedico home tweaking a display featuring Santa's reindeer.

The holidays weren't all that was coming, though.

Catherine was also nine months pregnant with the couple's first child, and as they herded Dasher, Dancer and all the rest into place, she paused.

The baby, she realized, was on its way.

As luck would have it, that was the same day St. Tammany Parish Hospital first opened its doors. A day later, on Dec. 2, their daughter – Cathy Ann Arnold Kemp – became the first baby born at the then-new facility.

Seven decades and 60,000 babies later, Cathy Kemp and the hospital – the flagship facility of St. Tammany Health System – are both preparing to celebrate their milestone 70th year.

"My dad told me this story – he served in the Army in Korea, and the state of Louisiana was giving returning servicemen a \$300 bonus check at the time," Mrs. Kemp said recently in the lobby of the hospital, sitting just feet from where the original delivery room was located. "Dad sort of giggled at the story and said he got his check from the state of Louisiana and then he gave it to St. Tammany Parish Hospital because my bill was \$300. He likes that little story."

To this day, Mrs. Kemp's father and mother, now 91 and 89, respectively, still relish their status as St. Tammany's first family. In fact, although they live just over the Tangipahoa Parish



Cathy Arnold Kemp shows off a photo of herself as a baby with her parents, Ottis and Catherine Arnold. On Dec. 2, 1954, Mrs. Kemp became the first baby born at St. Tammany Parish Hospital. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

line, they remain loyal patients of St. Tammany Health System.

"We cannot come to this hospital without whoever is the patient – my mother or my father – telling everyone they see," Mrs. Kemp said with a laugh.

"A year or so ago, my Dad was a patient for a few days, and everybody that entered – whether it was a doctor

or a nurse, someone taking blood, the sweet girl picking up the food tray – (he would tell them), 'There she is! She was the first baby born here! It's really been sweet and cute.'

Now retired after 30 years with Delta Airlines and another 14 with Aveda Institute, Mrs. Kemp said her parents chose St. Tammany Parish



Cathy Arnold Kemp, at center, pays a visit to the New Family Center at St. Tammany Health System's flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital. Mrs. Kemp was the first baby born at the hospital upon its opening in December 1954. Since then, more than 60,000 babies have been born there. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS image)

Hospital – as opposed to the tiny Wiginton Memorial, which operated in Hammond from 1942 to late 1959 – because their family physician, Dr. Jacob Kety, was among the first doctors on the St. Tammany Parish Hospital staff.

His business partner, longtime local physician Dr. Francis Rodwig, delivered the Arnolds' new arrival by Caesarean section, a fact mentioned in Dr. Rodwig's 2000 obituary.

"My mother said, in her words, 'I was pretty out of it,' and my dad said everybody was just bustling around," Mrs. Kemp said. "There were other people who had gone into labor, so it was sort of intrigue that I got to be the first one."

By the time newspapers reported the next morning that the long-awaited Covington hospital had opened, it was still unclear who would earn the title of first baby. The St. Tammany Farmer had a pretty good idea, though, noting that Mrs. Arnold "was awaiting her first baby and will undoubtedly be the first obstetrics case."

It was right. Little Cathy Ann Arnold was born Dec. 2, the first of eight babies born in the hospital's first week of operation.

To mark the occasion, the hospital gifted the Arnolds with a small sterling silver mug engraved with her name, her birth date and the words "1st Baby," printed just above "St. Tammany Hospital."

She still has that cup.

It's a little tarnished now. A little dinged up here and there. But it has pride of place in her home, just as it has for the past 70 years.

"Birthdays have always been a big deal to me," Mrs. Kemp said. "It's nice memories, especially for my parents. I love their loyalty."

"My husband and I lived in Hammond for 35 years, and we used a hospital there, our doctors were there. But my parents, all these years, always here. Always here." ■

YouTube

Scan the code to hear Cathy Kemp tell her story.



Our Hospital, Since 1954

Let the countdown begin STHS unveils 70th anniversary logo

By STHS Communication Department

Let's party, y'all.

Twelve months from now, on Dec. 1, St. Tammany Health System will mark the 70th anniversary of its flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital.

When it arrives, you can expect much pomp, circumstance – and birthday cake.

But an anniversary this big deserves more than a one-day party. That's why we've kicked things off early, counting down to the big day with a year's worth of celebrations.

That includes the development of a new 70th anniversary logo that locals can expect to see in the health system's advertising and marketing throughout the next year.

"We really wanted a logo that felt celebratory, something that has the energy of a celebration," Senior Marketing Specialist Tim San Fillippo said. "It needed to feel like confetti but without confetti, if that makes sense."

Its foundation is the health system's current logo, designed in 2019 to coincide with the rebranding of the health system, San Fillippo said. But above it is a large number 70 placed against a geometrical pattern in hues of the hospital's signature burgundy berry color and reflecting the prevalent style at the time of the hospital's mid-century founding.

Beneath it are the words "Our Hospital, since 1954," a reference to words spoken by inaugural Board Chairman Oliver Hebert at the hospital's 1954 dedication. "We must no longer call it 'the' hospital," Hebert said then. "From now on, it is our hospital."

"It might not look like it at first glance," San Fillippo said, "but that little logo accomplishes a lot. Just like St. Tammany Health System has in the past seven decades." ■

1 Pack smart. Before leaving for the parade route, ensure you have everything you may need to manage your diabetes. Check that you have all of your supplies, including a way to treat potential low blood sugar, your meter and test strips, any medications you will need throughout the day, etc.

2 Snack smart. Bring balanced snack options for when you get hungry throughout the day. A balanced snack will include a carbohydrate choice such as a starch, fruit or milk option paired with protein and/or a source of fiber such as non-starchy vegetables or a healthy fat to slow down the absorption of the sugars. (Example: apples with peanut butter, a protein-packed yogurt or nuts.)

3 Be cool. Save room for a lunch in your cooler. Try to keep the packed lunch as close to a balanced plate as possible, meaning a consistent amount of carbohydrates paired with fiber, protein and fat. (Example: a sandwich with turkey, cheese, lettuce and tomato; or a wrap with hummus, cucumbers, avocado, tomatoes, chicken and spinach.)

4 Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. Remember to bring and drink lots of pure water to keep yourself properly hydrated throughout the day, especially if you are drinking alcohol.



By Rebecca Snyder,
Tulane dietetic intern

When shifting your lifestyle after a diabetes diagnosis, always being prepared is key. Having a plan helps prevent situations in which the only foods around will cause a major spike in your blood sugar.

That's why it's important to plan ahead this Mardi Gras season to maximize having fun while still keeping your blood sugars under control. Here are nine tips to get you ready for Mardi Gras, which this year lands on Feb. 13. Laissez les bon temps rouler!

5 Easy does it. If you choose to drink alcohol, pace yourself. Alcoholic drinks can alter your blood sugar, so when drinking, it's important to be careful and check your blood sugars often.

6 Mix it up. When drinking, try to choose options that will cause less of a blood sugar spike. Try sugar-free options as mixers, such as sugar-free soda, flavored water mixes or diffused water.

7 Don't drink on an empty stomach. Pair drinks containing carbohydrates/sugar with fiber and protein. We don't recommend drinking sugar-filled beverages such as daiquiris or Hurricanes, but if you choose to celebrate the season with one of these, you can slow down the absorption of those sugars with fiber and protein. (Example: snack on nuts, rotisserie chicken, deviled eggs or a hamburger patty.)

8 Set alarms. Try to keep your schedule as close to normal as possible so you can match up with your insulin or other medication regimens. If you normally eat lunch at noon, consider setting an alarm on your phone to remind you to eat at your regular time. That way you can enjoy the parades without constantly checking the time.

9 Don't overdo it. You can still enjoy some of your favorite foods during Mardi Gras, but it is important to watch your portion sizes to safely balance your carbohydrate intake.

Rebecca Snyder is a dietetic intern with the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. For questions on how to manage your diabetes, contact St. Tammany Health System's Diabetes Education Department at (985) 871-5983.

You can also learn more at StTammany.health/DiabetesED.

A little help from their friends

Cancer center's therapeutic food pantry a community effort

By Mike Scott, miscott@stph.org

"Cancer," Jack Kahshou said into the microphone, "is a team sport."

As the administrator of St. Tammany Cancer Center — A Campus of Ochsner Medical Center, Kahshou was at the time addressing the crowd during a Survivor's Day celebration at the Covington facility in September.

But his words apply just as well to the overarching philosophy at the cancer center, which is built around integrative oncology — that is, treating the whole patient rather than just the disease.

That includes such things as music therapy, group therapy, medical acupuncture, and tai chi and yoga classes. It also notably includes the center's therapeutic food pantry, a community partnership between the cancer center, St. Tammany Hospital Foundation and the Northshore Food Bank that exemplifies the "team sport" approach.

"It's really difficult to imagine someone might not be able to receive the treatment they need just because they didn't have enough food or the proper food," Northshore Food Bank CEO Yvonne Roussel said. "Working with St. Tammany Cancer Center, as one of the leading cancer centers in the country, is really rewarding and humbling to us, to be able to be in that partnership."

In place nearly four years, the therapeutic food pantry is stocked through twice-weekly deliveries from the Food Bank, as well as through additional support from donors to St. Tammany Hospital Foundation.

That enables the cancer center to provide qualifying patients boxes of food that include staples specially



Team members at St. Tammany Cancer Center — A Campus of Ochsner Medical Center load a box of food into a patient's car as part of a drive-through Thanksgiving food distribution event. In addition to ministering to the nutritional needs of patients throughout the year, the center's therapeutic food pantry provides holiday meal boxes to cancer patients at Thanksgiving and Christmas, with support from donors to St. Tammany Hospital Foundation. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



Clinical dietitians Sarah Brignac and Jessica Greer are photographed in the cancer center's Therapeutic Food Pantry, which is kept stocked through a partnership between St. Tammany Cancer Center, St. Tammany Hospital Foundation and the Northshore Food Bank. (Photo by Tim San Filippo / STHS)

chosen by its clinical dietitians, as well as a few special, custom choices — canned peaches are a perennial favorite — from what has been dubbed the "client choice" pantry.

Given the fatigue and other possible side effects that come with cancer treatment, it's no small thing for patients to be able to stock up on food after getting their treatments rather than dragging themselves to the grocery.

"It's been really helpful," said local musician Amedee Frederick, who is also a pancreatic cancer patient. "I can get my fruits and vegetables, canned goods, even boxed goods. It's been overwhelming."

It can be just as overwhelming for cancer center dietitians Sarah Brignac and Jessica Greer, who have seen patients dissolve into tears upon having their car loaded up with food for their families.

"I think it's that they realize, 'There are people here for me who want to help. I'm not in this by myself. I have people rooting for me and caring for me,'" Brignac said. ■

To support the food pantry and other programs of St. Tammany Hospital Foundation visit STHFoundation.org.



From left: Jack Khashou, administrator of St. Tammany Cancer Center – A Campus of Ochsner Medical Center, pauses for a photo with Shaun Norris and Shelly Williams of event sponsor HUB International.



St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's deputies were on-hand to 'arrest' various desperados in exchange for reward money, which – like all proceeds from THE Gala – will benefit Northshore cancer care.

A million thanks

THE Gala surpasses fundraising milestone

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's annual Gala always gives Northshore residents a good reason to kick up their heels and party, but this year's Western-themed edition provided an extra reason to celebrate. Not only did it raise a record \$225,000-plus for Northshore cancer care, but it pushed the total raised since the event's 2018 founding past the \$1 million mark. A Texas-sized thank-you goes out to everyone who has helped make it a success over the years, including sponsors HUB International and Mary and Kevin Gardner, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana, St. Tammany Health System, Ochsner, Bienville Capital Group, UnitedHealthcare, Professional Emergency Medicine Management and Hancock Whitney. (Photos by Chuck Billiot for St. Tammany Hospital Foundation.)



A couple of suitably attired cowpokes try their hand at a little card-playing.



The Richerand family of Folsom's Giddy Up Coffee Shop belly up to the bar.



Gala guests engage in some spirited boot-scootin', courtesy of party band Groovy 7.



Representatives from Premiere Sponsor Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana show off their dandiest duds at THE Gala 2023, held at Tchefonca Country Club in Covington.

Angels of Light

In what has become a treasured Northshore holiday tradition, St. Tammany Hospital Foundation on Dec. 7 hosted the lighting of the 2023 Hospice Tree for Life. As always, the tree was adorned with Tribute Angels, each representing a special person who was being honored or memorialized by a friend or family member.

This year's tree was dedicated in loving memory of Mary Dugas Lee, a former foundation board member and a driving force behind its Healing Arts Initiative, for her fearless leadership and dedication to the foundation.

Proceeds from Angels of Light benefit St. Tammany Health System Hospice, which provides palliative and supportive care to terminally ill patients and their families in the home through an interdisciplinary team that addresses physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs.

Hospice unites a team of professionals, physicians, nurses, social workers, home health aides, clergy and trained volunteers into a compassionate alternative to traditional care. These services are available to everyone, regardless of ability to pay.



St. Tammany Health System Chief Nursing Officer Kerry Milton speaks during the Tree of Life lighting ceremony in the St. Tammany Parish Hospital lobby on Dec. 7. (Photos by Chuck Billiot for St. Tammany Hospital Foundation)



The sponsor for 2023's Tribute Angels were Angel and Eric Dunavant and family, who dedicated the angels in honor of Hazel Grace Simmons and the other stillborn babies of St. Tammany Health System.



The 2023 Trees for Life, on display in the St. Tammany Parish Hospital lobby in Covington.

A cute-as-can-be little pumpkin sinks her sweet tooth into a cumulus of cotton candy at the 35th annual Monster Mash celebration, held at Bogue Falaya Park in Covington. (Photo by Chuck Billiot for St. Tammany Hospital Foundation)



A SPIRITED CELEBRATION

Little monsters and gleeful goblins had plenty to howl about in October, as St. Tammany Hospital Foundation marked its 35th annual Monster Mash, a family-friendly Halloween fundraiser featuring games, crafts, rides, music and metric tons of treats, with proceeds benefiting the STHS Parenting Center. Special thanks to presenting sponsor Metaire Bank Northshore, as well as all the other sponsors, vendors and volunteers who helped celebrate what was a monstrous milestone!



The McDaniel family, including Sunny McDaniel (front row, fourth from right), show off their autism awareness T-shirts, which raised money for local autism efforts in April 2023. April is recognized as World Autism Month. (Photo provided by Sunny McDaniel)

A mother's love

How one child's struggle is changing the autism landscape on the Northshore

By Mike Scott, mscott@stph.org

For some people, it's Superman. For others, it's Wonder Woman or Black Panther.

But for St. Tammany Hospital Foundation Board of Trustees member Sunny McDaniel, heroes don't get much more inspiring than Sully.

He is 10 years old, he is one of McDaniel's three children, and — as a child with autism — he is the driving force behind her efforts to make St. Tammany Health System, and the Northshore as a whole, more welcoming to people with autism.

"He fights a war every day that most people take for granted," McDaniel said. "That kid is amazing. He is my superhero."

Like any good mom, McDaniel's efforts to educate herself on autism began early in Sully's life as the region's glaring lack of autism resources and support made itself evident.

So, she set out to fix that, but not just for Sully. As a nurse practitioner, she realized she could be a champion for her patients, too.

She started by earning a graduate certificate from the University of North Dakota to develop a deeper understanding of autism spectrum disorders.

"As a child, we learn things through play and we pick things up on intuition," she said. "But that's where kids with autism have trouble — with tone, with gestures, with figures of speech. So, we have to teach them how do deal with those things intellectually instead of intuitively."

Soon, McDaniel realized teaching children with autism how to deal with the world is half the solution. Just as important is educating the community.

"Autism is a medical diagnosis, but you don't treat it with medicine," McDaniel said. "Instead, you teach these kids about the world and teach the world how to meet them halfway."

To that end, McDaniel — who has been serving on the foundation board since January 2022 — helped

spearhead a program to get all of St. Tammany Health System pediatrics departments designated as Certified Autism Centers, signifying the staffs there have completed extensive training.

To date, five STHS departments have earned the designation: its St. Tammany Pediatrics primary care clinic, its Bone & Joint clinic, the Parenting Center, the hospital's Pediatric Emergency Department and its pediatric inpatient unit.

She also led the creation of a series of videos posted to StTammany.health/AutismSupport to help patients with autism know what to expect when they go see a doctor.

There's still plenty of work to do in the pediatric sphere, but McDaniel is already looking ahead to what's next. After all, Sully gets older every day.

"Soon," she said with a smile, "we're going to have to do the adult clinics." ■

"He fights a war every day that most people take for granted. That kid is amazing. He is my superhero."

– Sunny McDaniel



Visit STHfoundation.org/Autism or scan the code to learn how you can support St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's autism efforts.

Counting our blessings — all 1.3 million of them

Foundation donors demonstrated generosity, compassion in 2023



Nicole Suhre, STHF executive director

"We are proud to say that in 2023 we disbursed more than \$1 million back to St. Tammany Health System for its needs."

Happy New Year!

As we wish 2023 a fond farewell, I can't help but feel gratitude to our community for our shared accomplishments, as well as excitement for what is on the horizon.

Our donors demonstrated their support for St. Tammany Hospital Foundation last year, with an estimated nearly \$1.3 million raised. This impressive show of generosity speaks volumes about the way our community feels about the care provided to them by the physicians and colleagues of St. Tammany Health System.

The staff and Board of Trustees for the foundation sincerely value the trust our donors and volunteers put into our organization to steward these funds wisely. We are proud to say that in 2023 we disbursed more than \$1 million back to St. Tammany Health System for its needs.

Funds were used to purchase surgical equipment like the ground-breaking Aquablation Robotics system for prostate surgery (see page 7), ongoing support for patient-focused programs like our cancer center's Therapeutic Food Pantry (page 11) and Transportation Assistance program, equipment for Cardiology, EVS, NICU and Infusion Services, training for our Labor and Delivery team, free mammogram screenings on the Be Well Bus, transport van outfitting for the Mandeville ED, original works of art for our facilities and so much more.

We are blessed to be part of a community that works together to become better every day. On behalf of our board, I thank you for the generosity you showed us in 2023 and wish you all a happy and healthy new year.

Nicole Suhre, CFRE
STHF executive director

Foundation calendar Save the dates!



Get Lucky! Golf Tournament

March 14 | Beau Chene Country Club

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's annual golf tournament offers locals a chance to get back into the swing with the return of spring. Join fellow golfers on the greens as they play FORE a purpose and enjoy excellent food and beverages on the course as well as a fully catered golfer afterparty.

Details: STHfoundation.org/golf | 985-898-4141

National Doctors Day

March 30 | 24 hours of giving

National Doctors Day is a time to celebrate the contributions of physicians who serve our community. Our recognition of this special observance provides you the opportunity to make a donation to the foundation in honor of a physician of your choosing.

Details: STHfoundation.org/DoctorsDay (985) 898-4174

Autism Awareness Month


April 2024

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation invites the community to join us as we shine a light on autism awareness. Proceeds raised through our awareness efforts will support St. Tammany Health System's efforts to better care for those with autism.

Details: StTammanyUnited.org/Autism



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Virtual Care Now

There are always times when an in-person doctor's visit is preferable, but for those times when it's not – whether you're suffering from a cold or something more serious – our Virtual Care Now telehealth program lets you consult with a medical professional without having to so much as pull on your socks.

Ready for your Virtual Care Now visit? Schedule your appointment through the MyChart app, online at StTammany.health or by calling (985) 898-4001.